

EXAMPLES
FOR
ELEMENTARY PRACTICE



IN
DELINEATION

Margaret Fernald
1915

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EXAMPLES

FOR

ELEMENTARY PRACTICE

IN

DELINEATION

DESIGNED

FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND ISOLATED BEGINNERS

BY

CHARLES H. MOORE

INSTRUCTOR IN DRAWING AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"And let him (the young student) remember to acquire accuracy before he attempts quickness."

LEONARDO DA VINCI

BOSTON
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EXAMPLES

FOR

ELEMENTARY PRACTICE IN DELINEATION.

THESE examples are intended to afford materials for elementary practice in drawing, which, while they serve to train the hand and eye of the beginner to accuracy and precision, may serve also to quicken appreciation of those qualities of line which are expressive of living character and beauty. There are many ways of learning to draw; and whether, in beginning, to use flat examples, or to practise from real objects only, is often a question. It is sometimes thought that the use of examples is objectionable, and that the only useful practice is to draw from nature. But the objection to examples is valid only when they are bad. When they are so, the copying of them can hardly be other than a mechanical exercise, which will not tend to cultivate the eye, but will tend rather to render it obtuse, and to impair the faculty of appreciating what is good.

Only those examples are useful which illustrate what is true and beautiful in nature and art. Such examples are a great help to a beginner. They simplify the complexities which nature presents, and they illustrate her essential characteristics which the beginner would probably fail to perceive. And although it is true, as has just been said, that there are many ways of learning to draw, it is also true that some ways are more direct, economical, and efficient than others. The character and value of the drawing which one may learn will depend largely upon the way in which he learns, or, rather, upon *what* he learns. If a pupil be taught to draw from bad examples alone, there is danger that he will become only a copyist of their bad qualities. If he draw from nature alone, he will have a hard task of it, and will be likely, at best, to become an indiscriminating copyist of nature. The normal course would seem to be one in which good examples should be used in connection with work from nature. By their means the pupil is enabled to see just what he is required to do, and how it has already been done. And, when he has accomplished any thing successfully from the example, he will see his way more clearly

than he otherwise would, to work successfully from nature. At first simple delineation is all that may be wisely attempted, for main practice at least. Delineation is the essential basis of every thing in art, as the legends of the lines of Apelles, and the circle of Giotto, attest; and it is therefore important that one should strive to acquire, and to maintain, a habit of precise and accurate work in outline. At first the difficulty of drawing any line with steadiness and accuracy will be so great that the attention must be largely given to the one end of conquering it; but, after a little resolute and careful practice, a degree of skill will be acquired which will render the mind more free to enjoy the beauty of living lines. Drawing should always be as little as possible a merely manual exercise. It should, as far as possible, engage the intellect and the feelings. In order that it may do this, the examples used for main practice must be of significant and vital character. But for formal practice of hand and eye, purely geometric figures may be used with profit. The object of these last is to aid in the attainment of measurable precision only. They should never be regarded as of any other use or value. The practice which has widely prevailed, of using formalized natural or ornamental figures for elementary drawing exercises, is a thoroughly reprehensible one, because neither nature nor good ornament is ever formal; and such examples tend to deaden, rather than to quicken, the feeling for truth and beauty, while they afford no practice that may not be had equally well from purely geometric figures. The symmetry of nature and of good art co-exists invariably with a living changefulness of form which is essential to beauty. The outline, Plate 2, for instance, is about as symmetrical as a natural form ever is; and yet it will be seen at a glance that one side is not by any means the exact reverse of the other, but, on the contrary, the parts are everywhere beautifully varied, though they are balanced and complementary. The Egyptian figure, Plate 12, illustrates the same principle in a simple work of art. It is illustrated, also, in the most symmetrical Greek ornamentation, and in the finest Greek vases. In Italian and French foliate sculpture it is manifest, also, with exquisite variety and likeness to nature, notwithstanding that these forms are sometimes very severely conventionalized. Indeed, as a rule, it is in the structural forms of architecture alone, as in the Veronese and Venetian arches, Plate 13, that good art exhibits any thing like formal symmetry; and this formality is always modified and rendered agreeable to the eye by perspective.

The drawing of hard and precise outlines, in elementary practice, is useful for the sake of discipline merely. There are no outlines in nature; and the pupil ought early to understand, that, in his more advanced work, he will not usually execute his lines in this conventional way. But, without practice of this kind in beginning, he is not so likely to attain that clear and accurate conception and appreciation of form, and the ability to express it, which are of the highest importance to a draughtsman. Therefore the boundaries of an object, which to the eye will usually present a more or less softened and indefinite appearance, are at first to be rendered with firm and distinct lines, like those in these examples. These elementary conventional lines ought to be of mainly equal

thickness ; for, their function being simply to describe the boundaries of form, they can do so accurately, only in so far as inequalities of thickness are avoided.¹

This is a fundamental principle concerning outlines ; but, like most other principles, it may be, and usually is, transgressed more or less, in minor ways, by the very best draughtsmen. One reason for this is, that good artists do not often confine themselves to outline alone ; and, in giving indication of solid masses by simple linear shading, their outlines get accidentally re-enforced in parts, giving them an appearance of having been intentionally thickened in those parts.² And another reason is, that, however right the intention may be, few artists are able to strike contours with absolute correctness at once ; and, where they fail, they will touch again and again until the true form is reached. In such cases the added touches are generally made with emphasis, so that the true line may be clearly known. The main object in outline practice should be to make the lines follow their true course. Their quality, in other respects, is of little comparative importance. So that not only may this accidental thickening be tolerated, but also the natural tremor of the hand may give considerable unsteadiness, while yet the line remains essentially good. There are thus two distinguishing characteristics of good work in line, — first, that it expresses form perfectly by lines of measurable equality ; and, second, that in execution these lines exhibit more or less unsteadiness, which renders them totally unlike those which are produced by any mechanical means. We could not have better illustration of good lines than is afforded by the paintings on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs, two examples of which are reproduced in this series.

The outlines of these simple paintings exhibit a remarkable degree of precision, but they are not in the least mechanical. They are, on the other hand, wonderfully expressive of life, as only the well-trained hand can render it. In some cases these lines are executed with wonderful steadiness and equality, and yet with just enough rudeness to show that the work was executed by the free hand. The drawings upon Greek vases are also sometimes remarkable for skilful execution of lines. Marvellous skill is also frequently found in the French missal drawings, especially those of the thirteenth century. But there is no exception to the rule that hand-work always differs from mechanical work in more or less plainly betraying the natural unsteadiness of the hand. The human hand can not and ought not to do its work like a machine. Its unique power, when rightly trained, is to move with perfect responsiveness to the dictates of the perceptive and sensitive mind. Having this power, it can perform feats which no machine could be made to perform, notwithstanding its nervous tremor, which no amount of training can wholly conquer. The excellence of a line depends, therefore, not upon its mechanical equality and steadiness, but upon the accuracy of its main course. Beautiful and living lines are always governed lines. There is no chance about them. They exhibit those characteristics of proportion, restraint, contrast, and harmony, which mark the lines of nature. It

¹ See Ruskin's *Elements of Drawing*, pp. 84, 85, American edition.

² *Elements of Drawing*, p. 85.

sometimes may happen that a chance-swept line will have considerable beauty, but the forms of objects can never be rightly drawn by chance. To uncultivated persons, rapid chance-swept lines often appear spirited and attractive; and, consequently, rapidity of execution is sometimes urged prematurely. But the appearance of spirit, which comes of undisciplined and chance rapidity, is not a quality which will satisfy persons of cultivation. The only true spirit is that which co-exists with deliberate intention and truthful expression.

As has been already said, hard and distinct outlines ought, as a general principle, to be drawn for elementary practice only. If drawn at all by advanced students, it should be only when working under the well-understood limitations of simple delineation, as in studying contours, or in designs for engraving, for stained glass, or other strictly conventional modes of expression where outlines must, in the nature of things, be treated in a conventional way. But whenever these limitations are not necessarily imposed, the hard line should be abandoned. After having attained the power of copying such examples as these, with reasonable accuracy and steadiness of line, the student ought to practise sketching in a freer way. He should strive to indicate, as simply as he can, the main proportions of objects, and the expressive characteristics of living things. In such work, instead of the hard and exact single line, a light, free, and more or less repeated stroke with a soft pencil will be his best method. Thus there are properly two kinds of delineation,—the one in which one works *for* line, and the other in which one merely suggests form *in* line. The first is the more useful for elementary practice, and the examples in this series are prepared for this use. They consist of reproductions of pen-drawings,—ten of them from nature, and ten from examples of art. These last will be of especial value, since such illustrations of some of the best existing forms of linear design rarely fall within reach of beginners in drawing.

METHOD OF WORK.

To draw any form or figure correctly, the first thing to be done is to gain a right conception of its general proportions, and the direction of its main lines; to notice whether these lines are straight, or more or less curved; and, with respect to the curves, to observe the degree of curvature, and the proportions of their several parts.

As a first lesson, let the pupil mark off very lightly, with his pencil, any portion of the line forming the upper part of the spiral of nautilus-shell in Plate I, and through the extremities of the portion so marked off rule a straight line, also very lightly (Fig. 1). Then, by comparison with this straight line he may more readily estimate the degree of curvature in the curve. A corresponding straight line should now be ruled on his own paper, and upon it the points where the extremities of the curve touch it should be placed,—first, as nearly as possible, by eye; but it should be corrected by exact measure.

ment. Then between these points, with free hand and light stroke, the curve may be drawn as accurately as possible. The work may be tested by ruling lines, on both original and copy, perpendicular to the straight line, from any points, A and B, and producing them till they meet the curve. If the curve is true, these lines, in original and copy, will correspond in length of course.

Another way to test the drawing is to make a careful tracing of the original line, and to apply the tracing to it. If the lines do not exactly correspond, it will at once be seen where correction is needed. The beginner should practise on simple curves in this way till he can draw them with measurable correctness. The practice of actually drawing straight lines, as an aid to the eye in estimating curves, ought to be dispensed with as soon as possible. After a little practice, most pupils will be able to make the comparison mentally.

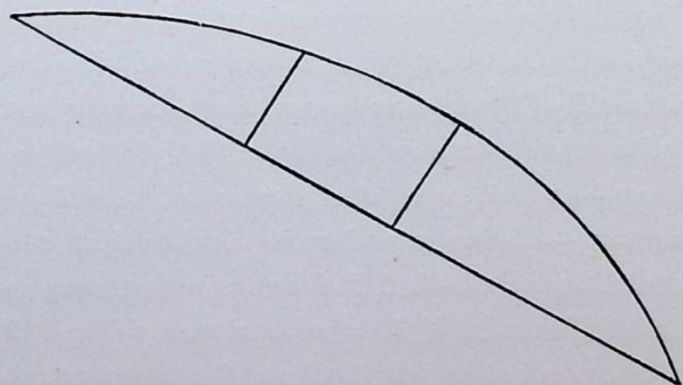


FIG. 1.

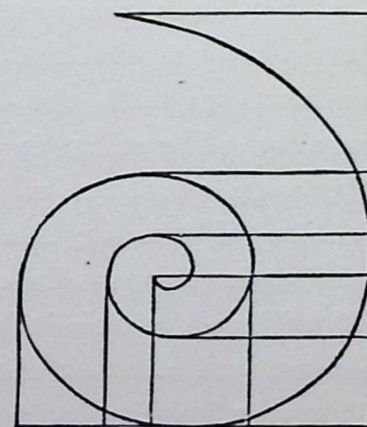


FIG. 2.

To draw a more complex curve, like the whole spiral of nautilus-shell, a number of horizontal and upright lines may be lightly drawn on the example, and others, exactly corresponding, on the paper, previous to commencing the drawing, as in Fig. 2. The paper should be pinned to a drawing-board, and these guiding-lines very accurately ruled by means of the T-square. The curve may then be drawn as truly as possible within them, points having been taken on the lines wherever the curve crosses them. By a similar method any other figure may, of course, be got in true proportion. In working from real objects, a plumb-line is often used in place of the upright lines, and a pencil, mahl-stick, or ruler, is held up in place of the horizontal lines; but an accomplished artist carries on this process in his mind only.

A further aid in seizing form correctly is the habit of looking for the main slopes and angles, and striking in right lines corresponding to them, — forming polygonal figures within which the actual forms will fall, as in Fig. 3. This process may be employed for the whole form first; and it may be repeated, if necessary, for all minor subdivisions. It is sometimes also found helpful to resolve curves into systems of right lines and angles, as a means of securing the main directions and proportions of their parts, as in Fig. 4. But

in this case the true curves must be drawn at last through the temporary angular construction, which is to be used simply as an aid. The habit of "square drawing," which has lately prevailed in some European schools, is an unnatural and a bad one when it tends, in any degree, to substitute straight lines and angles for the curves of nature. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the drawings of the great Italian masters. They invariably draw their forms in their true curves, from the first; as the photographs from drawings by Raphael, M. Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and others demonstrate. The foregoing methods are useful, not only for flat examples, but for all work from real objects. In copying, however, it will not usually be necessary to actually draw any guiding-lines: it will be enough to take lateral and vertical measurements of leading points with the compasses, or a strip of paper. (It is absolutely necessary to take the measurements in these two directions, either actually or mentally.)

In using the compasses, care should be taken to avoid pricking the paper, either in example or copy. Great care, also, must be taken with the tracings; for, unless they precisely conform with the original lines, they will not test the accuracy of the drawing. The exercise of tracing is a good one in itself. By it one may more surely get into sympathy with the lines to be drawn, and gain steadiness and skill of hand besides. By the practice of tracing the master's cartoons, — which was the first work usually given to a scholar in the studio of an Italian master, — there can be no doubt that much of the skill of hand, which is invariably characteristic of Central Italian painting, was gained.

The method of work should be to sketch the lines in lightly with a well-pointed F pencil. This may be done at first by successive short strokes; and, when the lines are correct in main direction and character, they may be gone over with a more continuous stroke, and with a firmer hand. Where there are inequalities of thickness, and occasional breaks in the line, as in Plate 15, these should be followed as nearly as may be, though not too slavishly. The finishing of the lines may be done either with a pencil, or a pen and very black ink. In first practice, the pencil and the pen are the best instruments to use, because their hard points support the hand, and render precision more easy; but, in a later stage of progress, the student ought to practise drawing lines with the brush, as they were drawn in the Egyptian wall-paintings, on Greek vases, and in the pictures of the Italian masters.

This practice with the brush may be conducted on the scale of the examples first; but afterwards it will be well to enlarge them several diameters, — which may be readily done by taking measurements as before, and repeating each dimension in the drawing as many times as it is desired to enlarge the figure. When working on the enlarged scale, the drawing ought to be pinned to a board supported in an upright position, as on an easel; and the lines may be sketched in with charcoal. The method of using charcoal for this purpose should be that which was employed by the old Italian designers. It is thus described by Cennino Cennini, an Italian artist of the fourteenth century. He says, "Procure some fine charcoal, cut to a fine point, like a pen or stile. . . . If you have

not proportioned your drawing exactly by the first touches, take a feather, and with the feather part of it rub and clean away the charcoal from what you have drawn, and the design will be effaced. Begin again from that part, the proportions of which appear to agree with the original; and when you see that it is correct, take the silver stile, and retrace the outlines." Instead of the silver stile, the pupil will now use the lead-pencil; and when the lines are secured with it, all the charcoal may be dusted off with the feather or a soft rag, when the lines may be gone over with a well-pointed red-sable brush charged with lampblack, Indian-red, or any other water-color.

The pupil should carefully notice, in each example, what are its important characteristics and beauties. In the spiral, Plate 1, he will find that no portion of the curve can

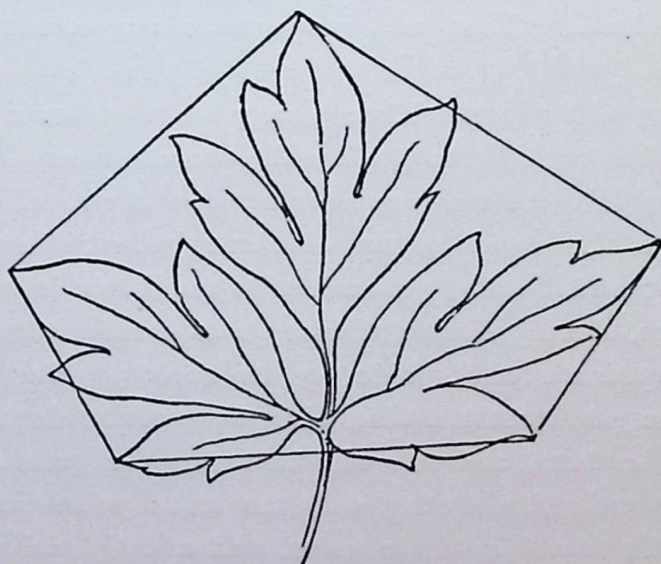


FIG. 3.

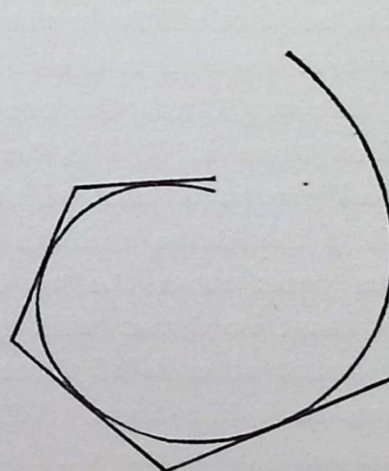


FIG. 4.

be executed with the compasses; and in so far as he is able to feel the life of it, will he feel also the unsatisfactory nature of all those spirals which are drawn by mechanical means. If, as he ought, he takes an interest in architecture, he will find, on examination, that in fine Ionic capitals the spiral is always cut in a vital line; and that it is the same, wherever it occurs, in good architecture.

In Plate 3, the temperate curve of the central stem, and the graceful, though slight, enlargements of the leaf-stalks where they grow out of it, are important points to notice. Also, where a leaf is seen in perspective so as to show parts of both upper and under surfaces, the pupil should take care that the line of the leaf-stalk and midrib should form one continuous curve. It is a common mistake to draw that portion of the line which is visible on the under side, and that which is visible on the upper side, so that if joined they would not become one curve. It requires close attention and much practice to render the varying perspectives of leaves correctly. Even practised artists not uncommonly fail in drawing them.

In the spray of olive, Plate 6, the grace and refinement of form are particularly noticeable. The willow, which in some other respects resembles it, does not compare with it in these qualities. The leaf-stalks part from the main stem with most subtile curves, and the parts are all exquisitely proportioned.

Special pains should be taken with the points where the groups of leaflets start out from their common foot-stalks, in Plate 7; and the manner in which the leaves radiate is important also.

In Plate 8, the bracket-like enlargement of the end of the stem, in preparation for the cluster of terminal buds, and the similar enlargement, with its leaf-scar, under each axillary bud, must be carefully expressed. The character of the points where the new shoots have grown out of the older stems calls for special attention also. But in every case details of this kind should be left until after the leading lines and proportions are correctly — though roughly — secured.

On account of the number and intricacy of its parts, Plate 9 may seem rather a difficult one at first. But the difficulty may be lessened if the pupil will proceed in an orderly way. He may first take the main stems as if there were no leaves upon them. Having sketched them in lightly, he may next take the upper group of three leaves; then the terminal groups of each of the other stems; and, finally, proceed with the inner leaves, — for which the stems and the terminal groups, already drawn, will serve as excellent guides. In the great stem the terminal bud, clasped on either side by its accompanying leaf-stalks, must be drawn with great care. The pupil must notice, also, the precise degree of enlargement of each of these leaf-stalks at its base, and the way in which the great stem narrows in below them. Where the lower leaf-stalks spring out, the same points are to be noticed. A subtle variety of form will be found in these parts, and a delightful variation will appear also in the axillary angles. Nor must the character of the enlargements along the parent stem, below where the leaf-stems branch out, be overlooked. All these points require to be clearly characterized, while, at the same time, they should be strictly subordinated to the main spirit and action of the object delineated.

In Plate 10, only the leading branches of the tree are represented, the multitudes of finer sprays being omitted for the sake of simplicity. A student who appreciates the beauties of tree-growth can hardly copy this example without enjoyment.

In Plate 11, the curve of the echinus will tax the skill of the best pupil. It is a line of great subtlety, differing from the lines of most other Doric capitals in the same way that the finest Greek art differs from all less-refined arts.

The lines of the Veronese arch (that at the left in Plate 13) have much of the same character as the preceding. In this subtlety of line the Italian artists manifest close artistic kinship with the Greeks.

The expression of life in Plate 16 will be readily felt, in spite of a degree of woodenness in it resulting from the undeveloped skill of the ancient designer.

Excellent practice may be had from Plate 17; and the arrangement of lines in the

drapery will teach the pupil much respecting Greek design, and will help him to appreciate the evidences of the essential kinship between it and Early and Central Italian design.

The original of Plate 18 is outlined with a brush in brown color on a gold ground, in a picture by one of the scholars of Giotto. It is a graceful and an instructive piece of Early Italian ornamentation.

The designs in Plate 19 are copied from one of the finest illuminated manuscripts in the British Museum. They are exquisite illustrations of the best work of this kind ever produced. The originals contain many fine details which are omitted here because they would confuse the pupil, and their beauty is enhanced by color which is no less exquisite than are the lines.

FORMAL EXERCISE.

1. With a sharp F pencil draw a very light horizontal line with the T-square; measure off three inches upon it, and place dots with the pen indicating this length. Now rub out the line, and the dots only will remain. Between them, endeavor to draw, with

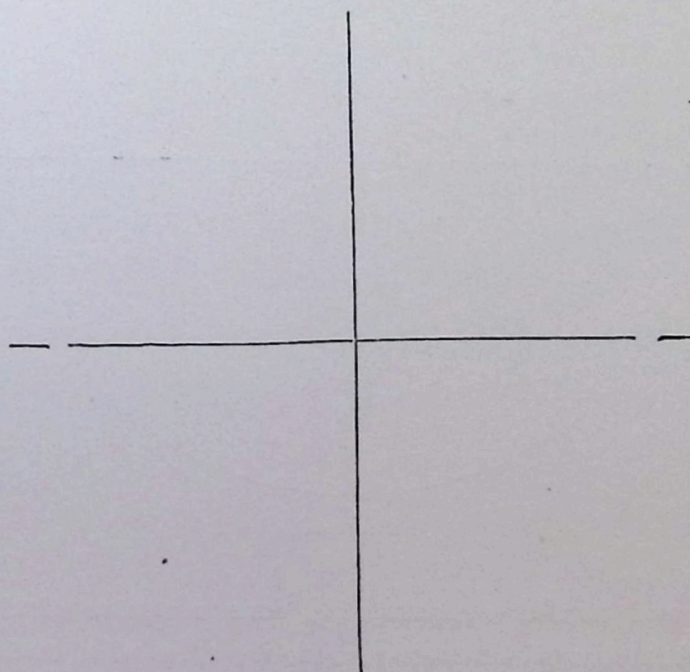


FIG. 5.

free hand, a perfectly straight line with the pencil. When this is done, apply the ruler; and, where any departure from the straight line is detected, rub out, and try again. When the line is right, go over it, free hand, with a pen and black ink. Now try to bisect this line by eye, placing a pencil-dot exactly in the middle of it. Test, and correct

by compasses. When the middle is accurately found, rule a light upright line through it with the pencil, by means of the T-square. Then place dots by measurement on this line, exactly one inch and a half respectively above and below the horizontal line. Fix them with the pen, erase the ruled line, and, with free hand, endeavor to draw a perfectly straight upright line. Test, correct, and lastly ink in as before. Try to do the same thing without the T-square and measurements, but always use both to test the work. Fig. 5 illustrates this exercise when completed.

2. With the compasses, and a radius of one inch and a half, strike a circle. Through its centre, with T-square, rule its horizontal diameter. Bisect the upper half of the circle by eye, test and correct by measurement, and draw, free hand, an upright line from centre to circumference. In the same way bisect a quarter of the circle, and, with free hand, draw a straight line at 45° . Go over the whole with pen and ink, endeavoring to keep the lines everywhere of equal thickness. Practise this entirely by eye. (See Fig. 6.)

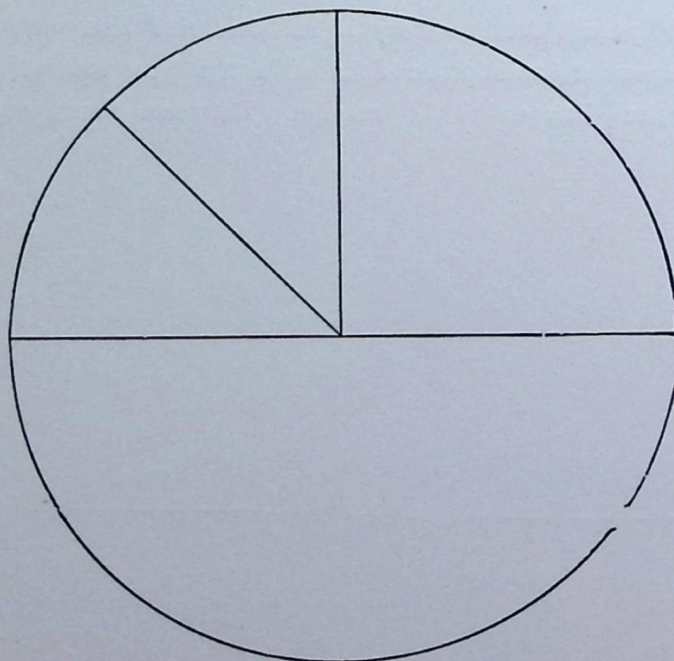


FIG. 6.

3. With T-square, and careful measurement, draw a square of three inches on a side. Rule in its upright and horizontal diameters, and its diagonals, and, with the compasses, inscribe a circle. From the points in the upper half, where the diagonals cross the circle, set upright lines to the upper side of the square. Produce the upright diameter about two and a half inches above the square, and place a dot at the end of it. This dot may be taken as a point of sight, by means of which we may draw the square and circle in perspective. From the points, A, B, C, D (Fig. 7), rule lines to the point of sight. At a distance of one inch above the upper side of the square, rule a line parallel to it between

the two converging lines.¹ We now have our square in perspective. Next rule in its diagonals, and through the point of their intersection rule the horizontal diameter. From the points C and D, draw lines to the sight point. We now have eight points through which

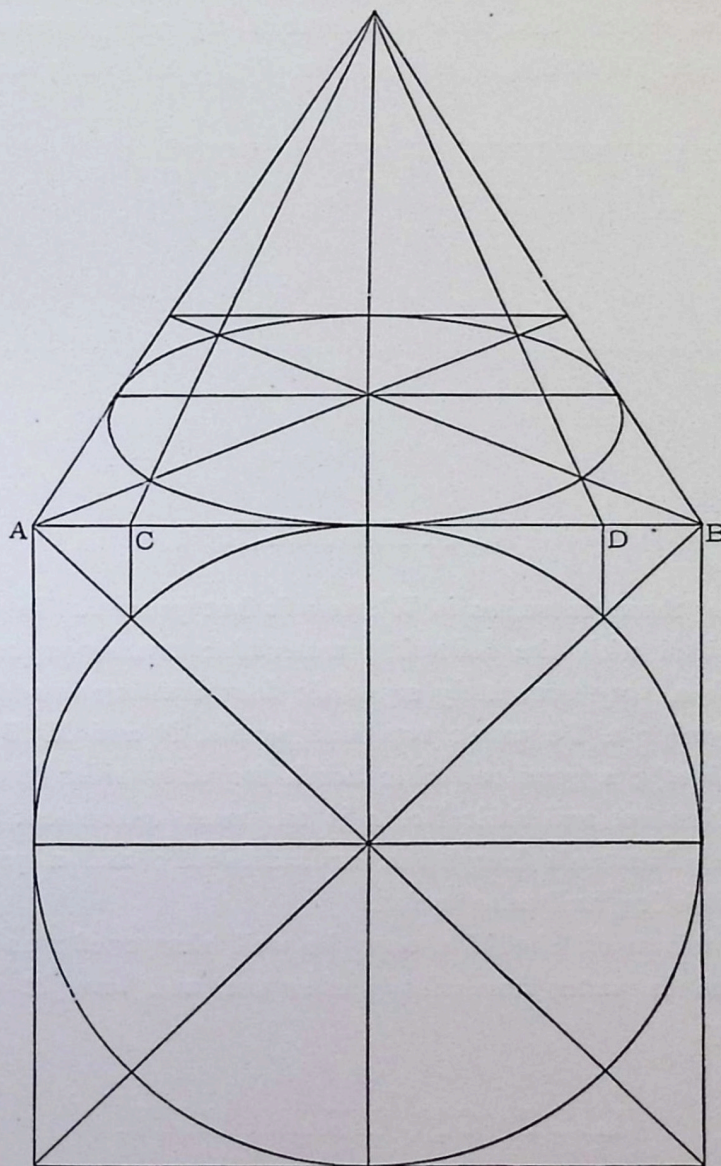


FIG. 7.

the ellipse, into which the circle in perspective resolves itself, will pass; namely, those where the diameters touch the sides, and those where the lines from C and D cross the diagonals. Now, with free hand, draw this ellipse as accurately as possible.

¹ Although we are drawing the square and circle in perspective, yet this is not to be considered as a *lesson* in perspective. We do not, therefore, consider how the position of the farther side of the square in perspective would be determined by the distance of the eye and the situation of the plane in which the square is contained.

4. Draw a parallelogram, with T-square, one inch wide, and four inches long. Divide it into four equal parts. With free hand, endeavor to fill the first space with equally thick, and equally spaced, upright lines; the second, with similar horizontal lines; the third, with lines inclined downwards from right to left; and the fourth, with lines inclined downwards from left to right. Complete the exercise by going over all these lines with the pen. The work when finished should resemble Fig. 8 as nearly as possible.



FIG. 8.

MATERIALS.

The best paper for these exercises is Whatman's hot pressed. In addition to this, the pupil should be provided with the following materials: tracing-paper; a drawing-board, twelve by sixteen inches, very accurately squared; four drawing-pins (to secure the paper in position on the board); a T-square; two lead-pencils, F and H B; a piece of india-rubber (pure gum is best); a good red-sable brush for water-color (the best are made by Messrs. Winsor and Newton, and their No. 4 is the most convenient size for this work); a cake of Winsor and Newton's lampblack, or Indian-red; and a pair of German-silver compasses, with movable leg and pencil-point.

The pencils for this work should always be well sharpened; and the brush should be thoroughly cleansed in water *immediately* after use, and brought carefully to a point before being laid away.

LIST OF EXAMPLES.

1. Spiral of nautilus-shell, and outline of sea-urchin.
2. Outline of leaf of bulbous crowfoot, enlarged.
3. Shoot of lilac.
4. Spray of holly.
5. Leaf of dialytra.
6. Spray of olive.
7. Spray of woodbine.
8. Twig of oak.

9. Spray of ash.
10. Young maple.
11. Profile of capital of the Parthenon, from Stuart and Revett's "Athens."
12. Egyptian outline from Rosilini.
13. Lines of Veronese and Venetian arches, from Ruskin's "Stones of Venice."
14. Outline of vine-leaf from a Byzantine carving, Venice.
15. Bird from an Egyptian wall-painting.
16. Zebra from an Assyrian bass-relief.
17. Figure from a Greek vase.
18. Pastoral staff from a picture by Giotto in the Uffizi Gallery.
19. Initial letter S, and portion of letter P, enlarged from a thirteenth-century manuscript.
20. Outline of head from a fresco by Botticelli at Rome.

NOTE.

Plates 15 and 20 are copied from paintings in which the outlines were drawn distinctly with a brush. The double and somewhat broken character of the lines in these plates represents, measurably well, the thickness and inequality of the original lines in both cases. The soft pencil or the brush will be better instruments than the pen to use in copying them.

Plate 20 is an interesting illustration of the distinctly linear character of Florentine painting. The outlines remain thus visible in the completed works of nearly all the great Florentine painters. This characteristic marks a limitation which renders the Florentine school less technically perfect, as a school of painting, than the Venetian. The design on the outside of the cover is the girdle of roses from the figure of "Spring," by Sandro Botticelli, preserved in the Academy of Florence.

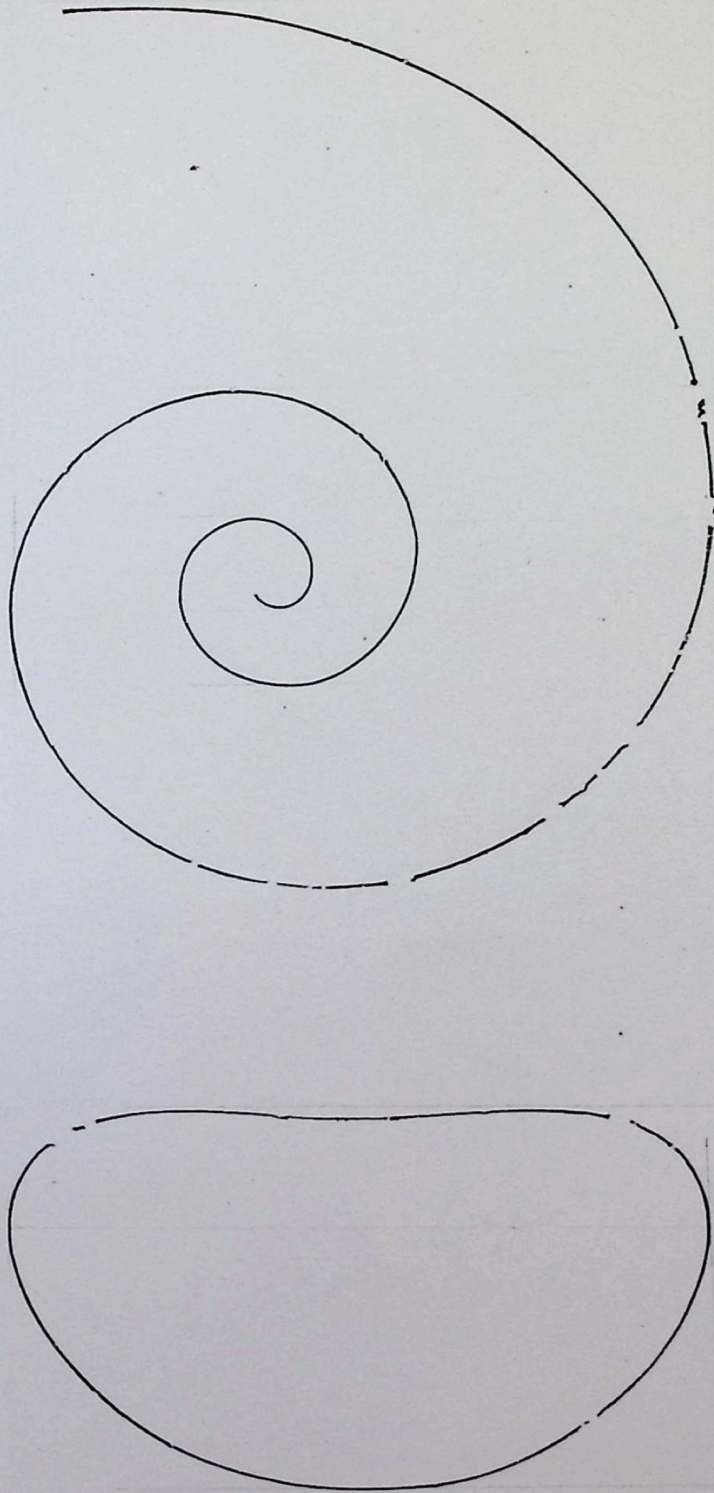


PLATE 1.

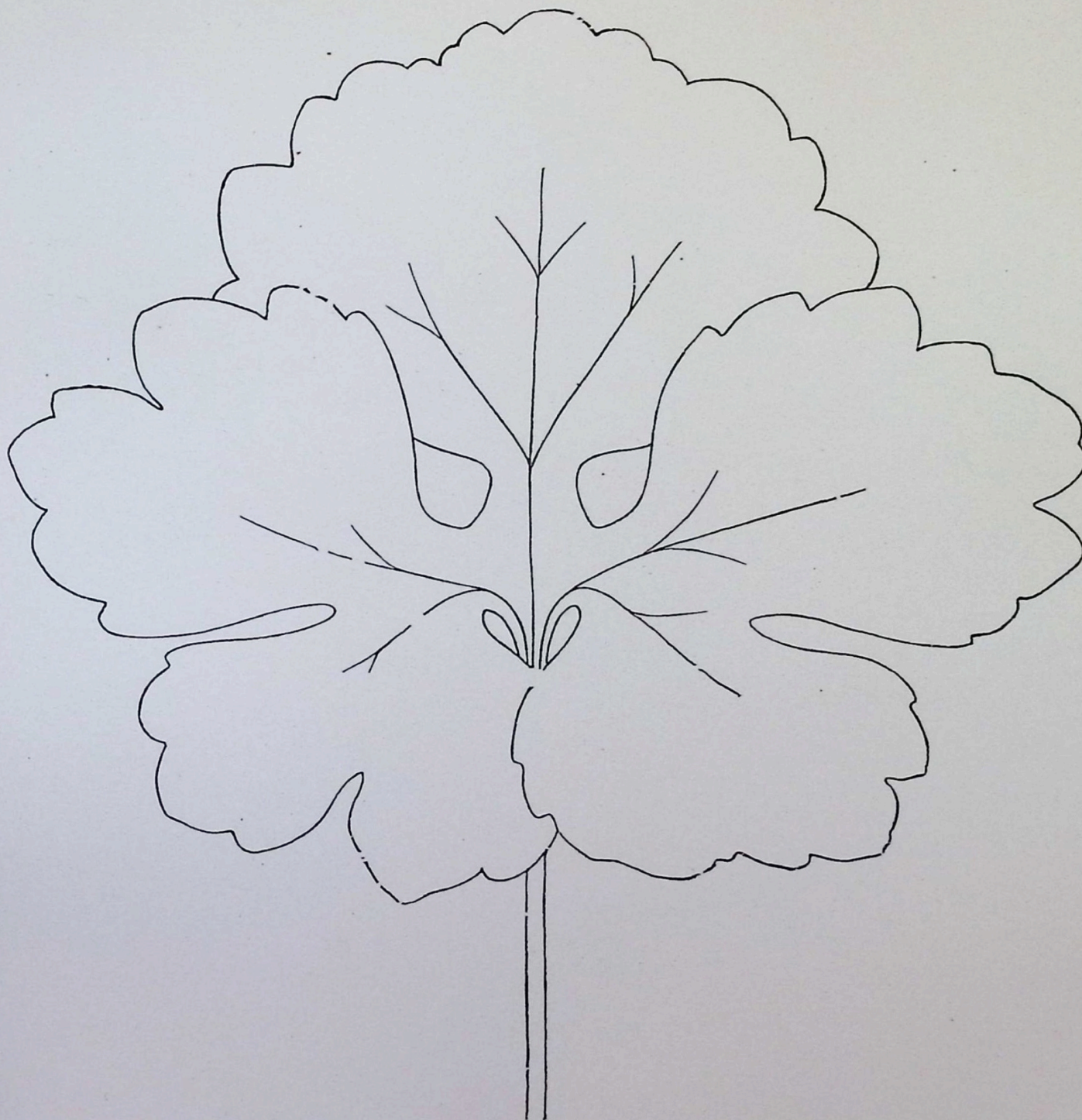


PLATE 2.

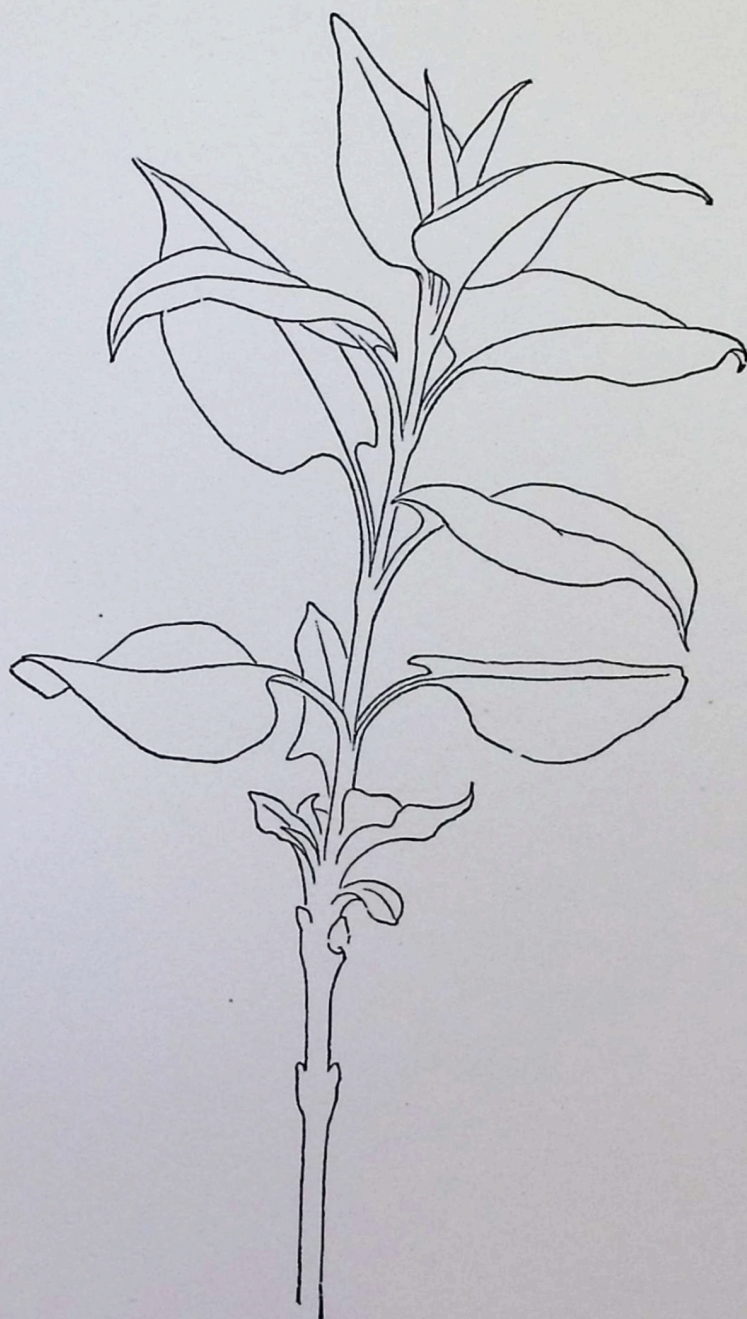


PLATE 3.

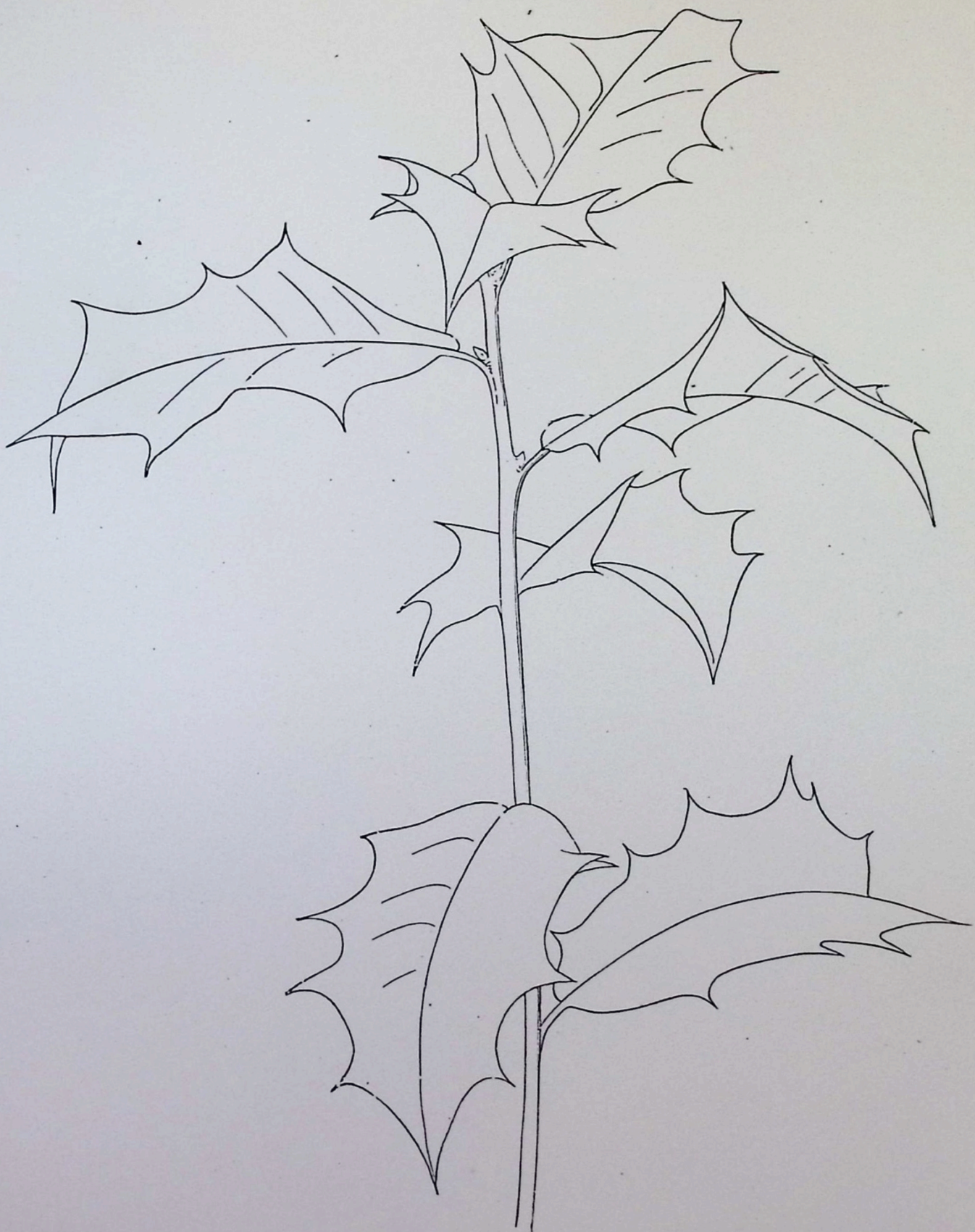


PLATE 4.

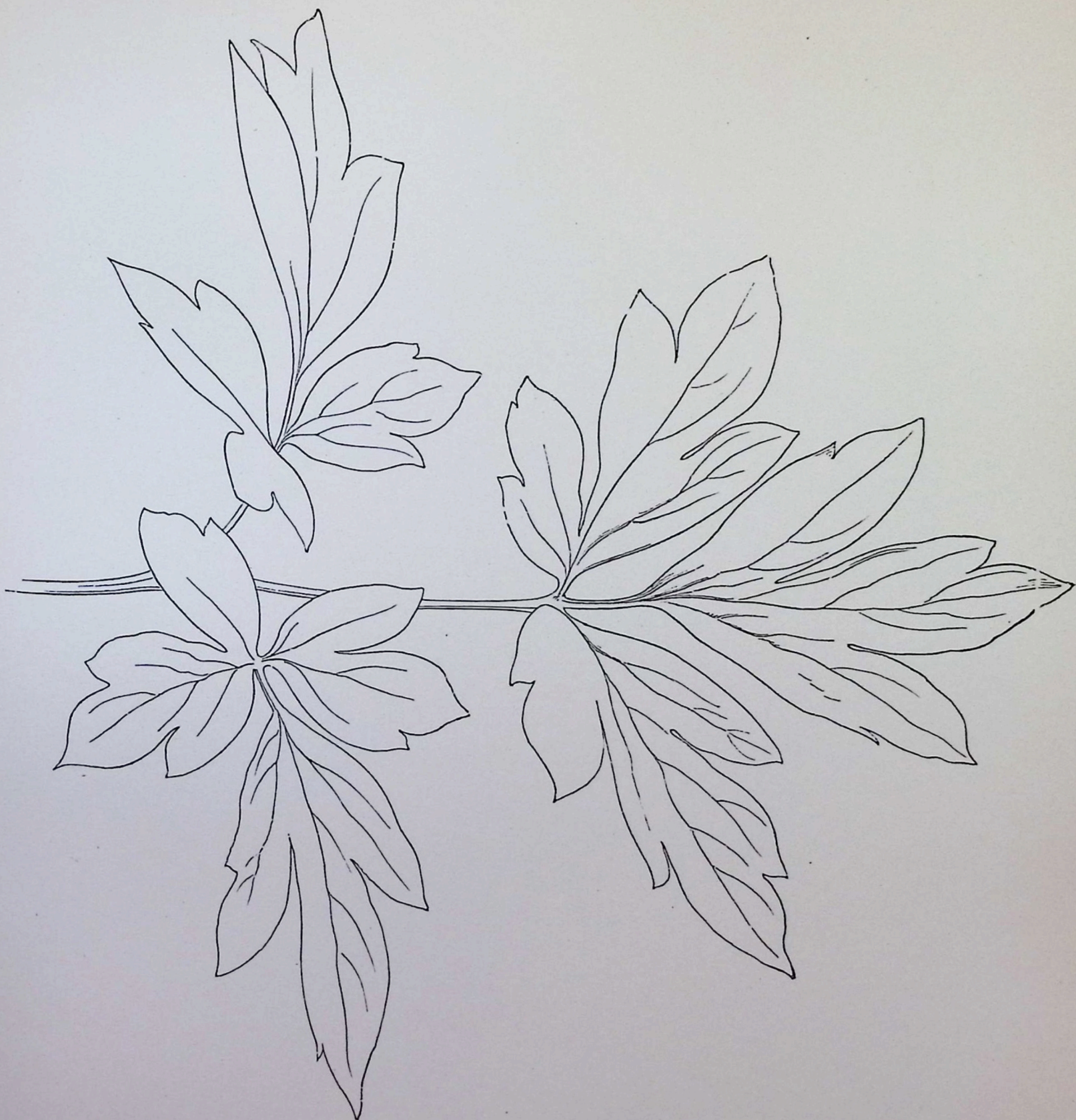


PLATE 6.





PLATE 7.

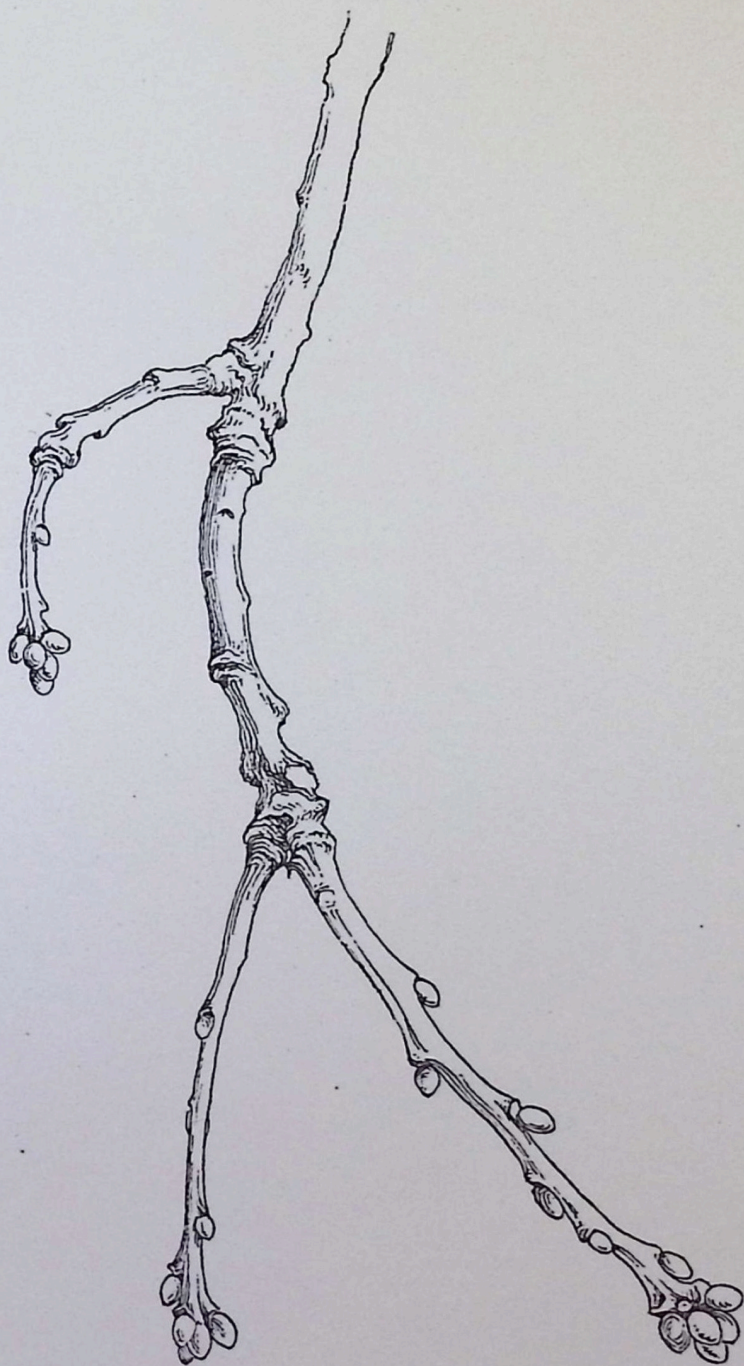


PLATE 8.





PLATE 9.

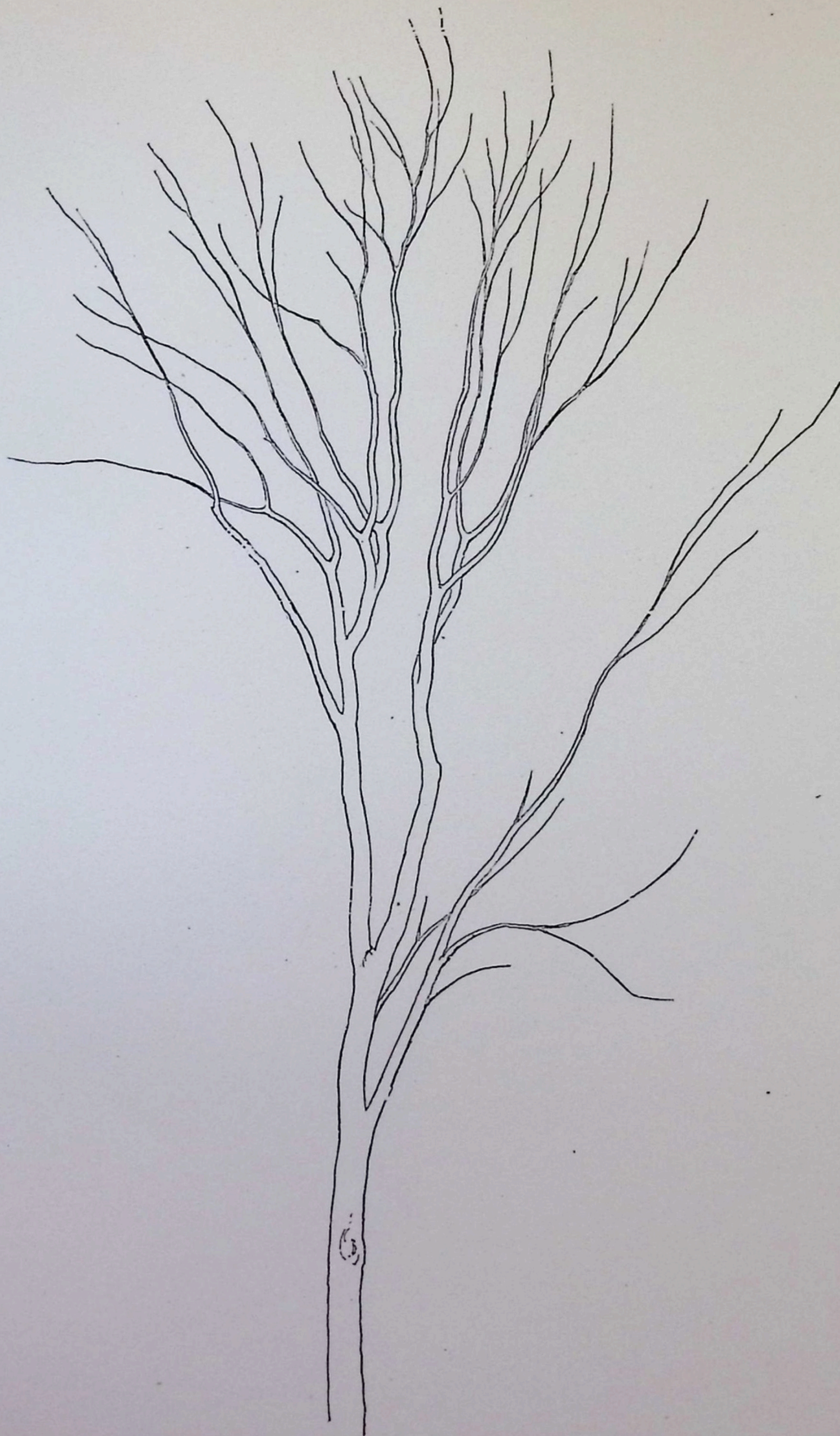


PLATE 10.

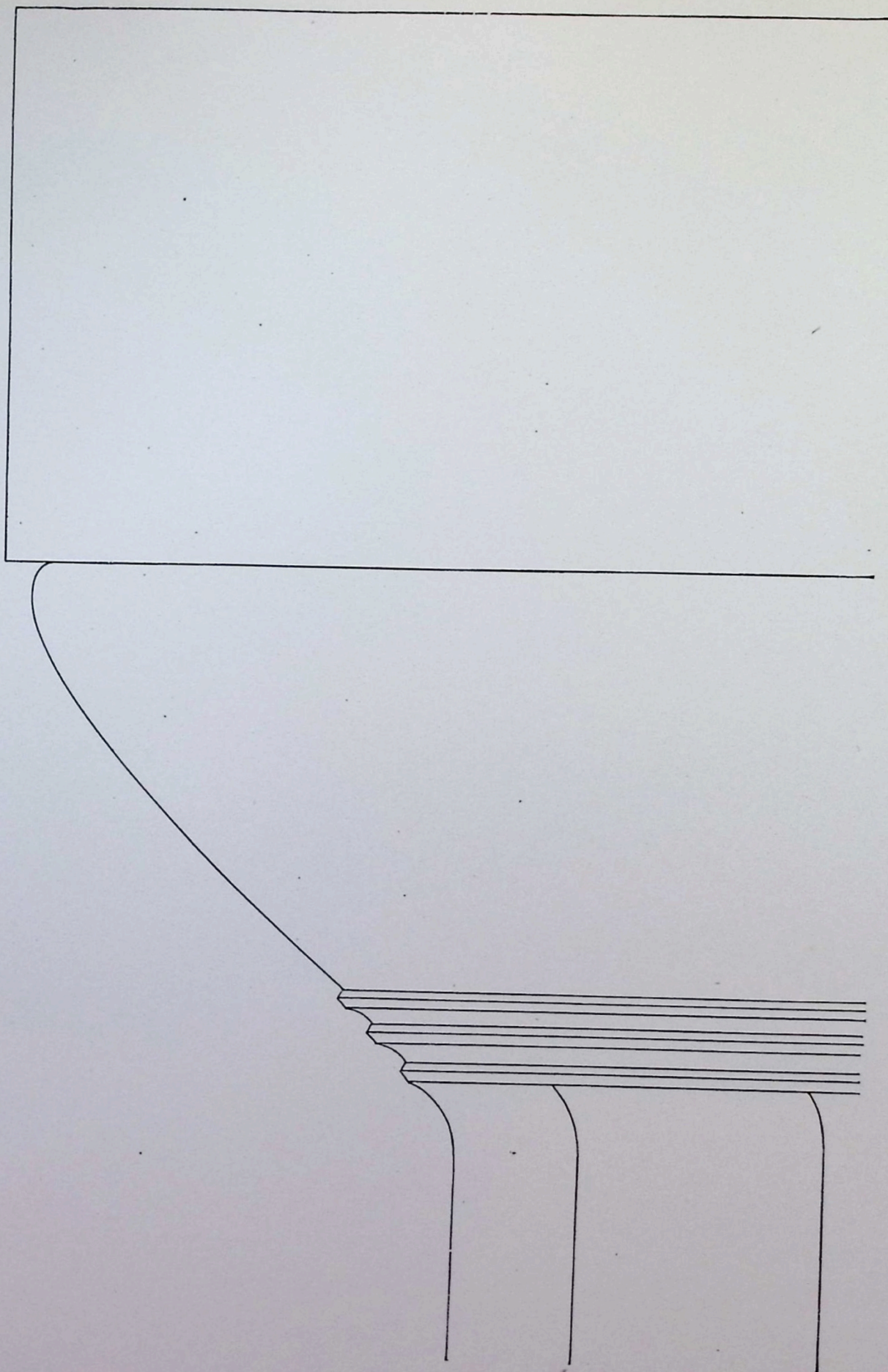
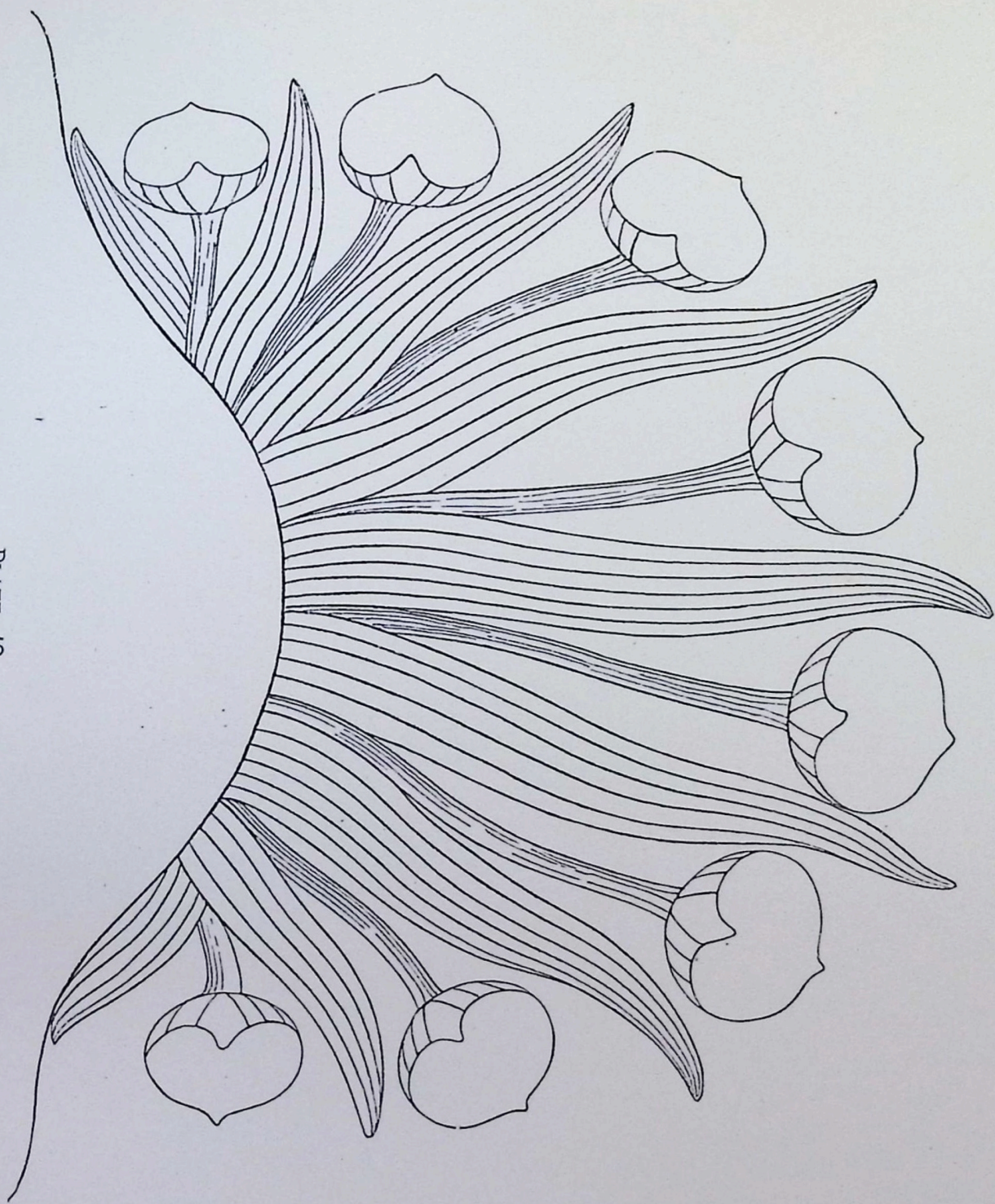


PLATE 11.

PLATE 12.



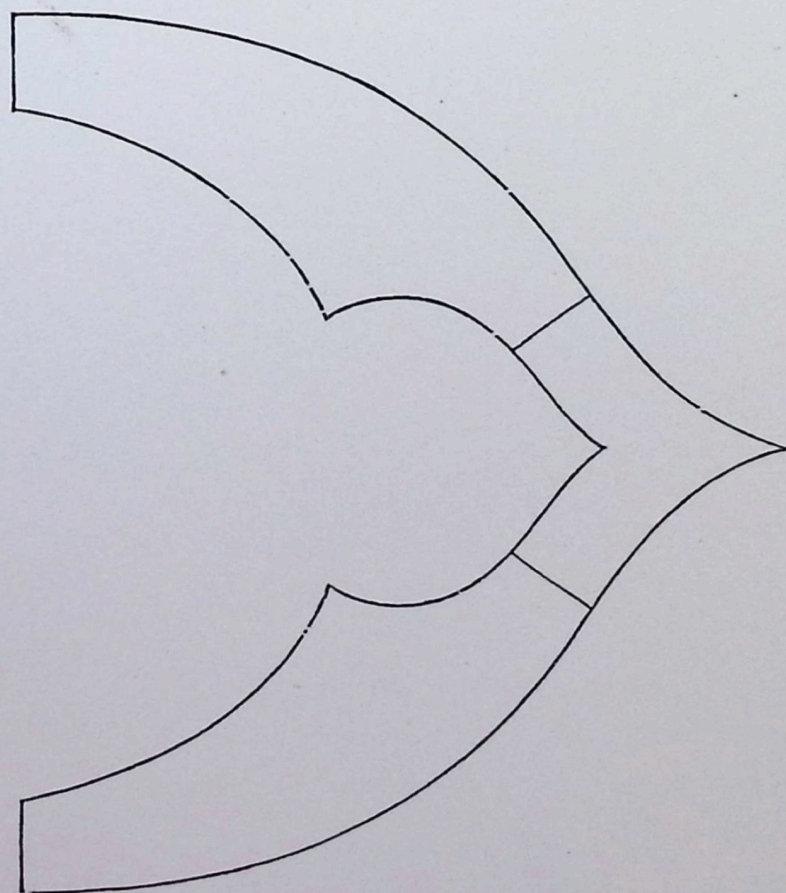
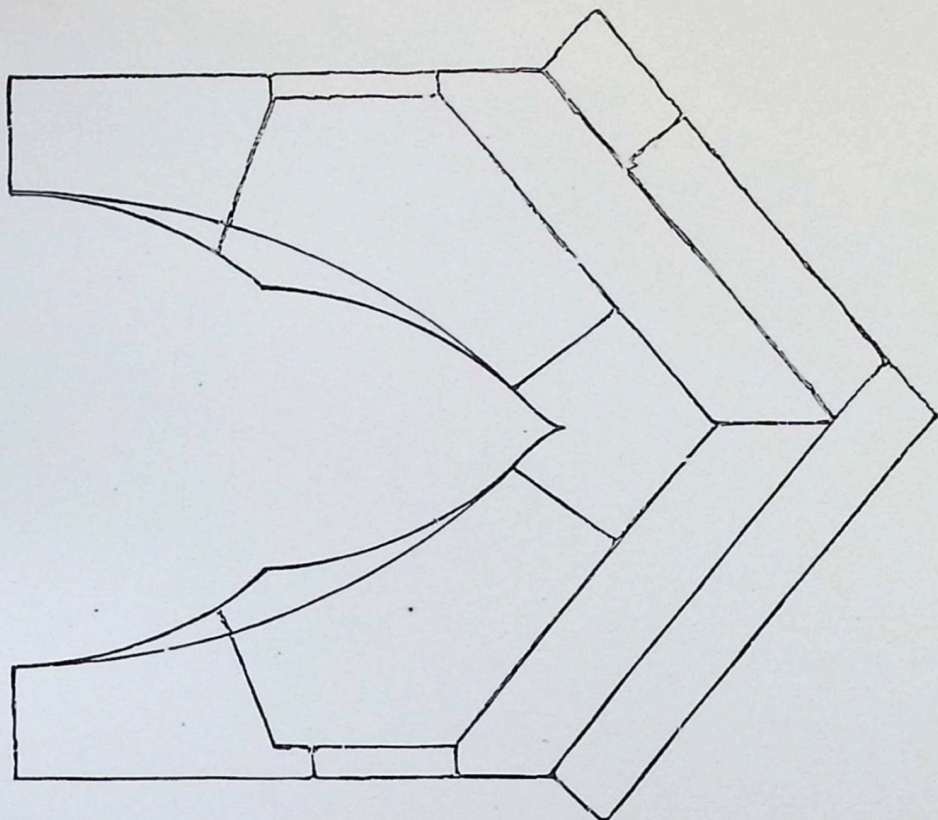


PLATE 13.



PLATE 14.

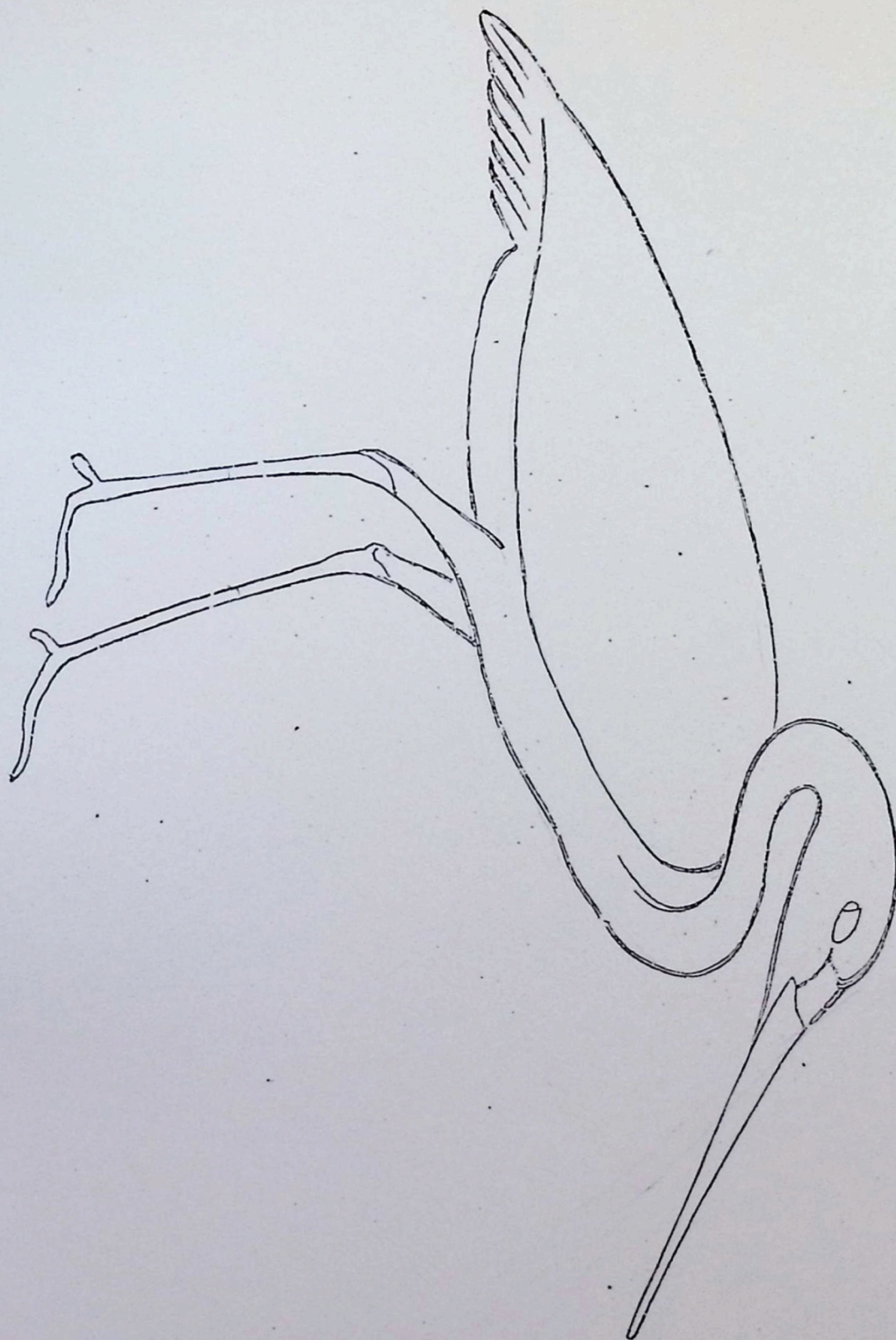


PLATE 15.

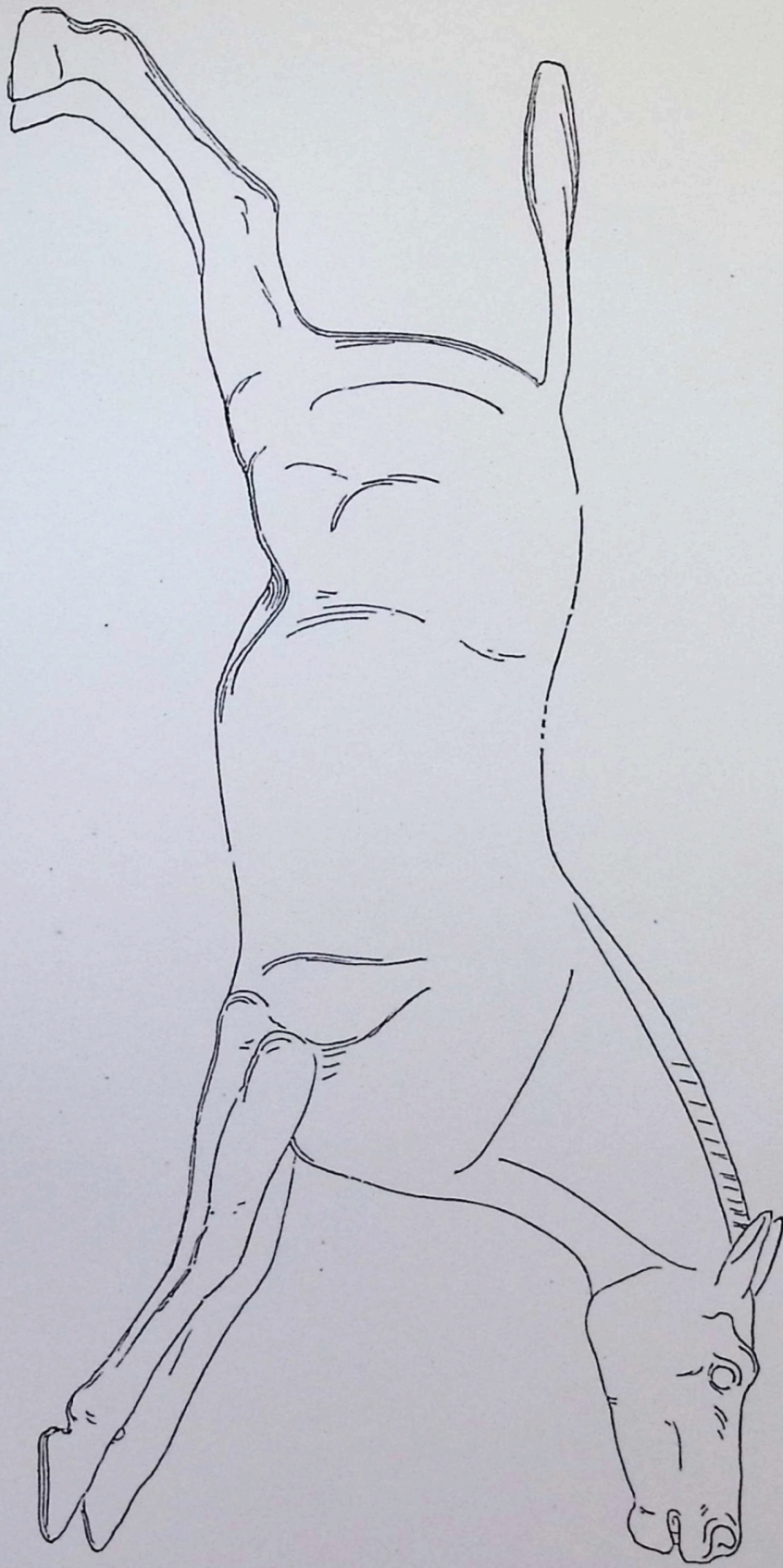


PLATE 16.



PLATE 17.

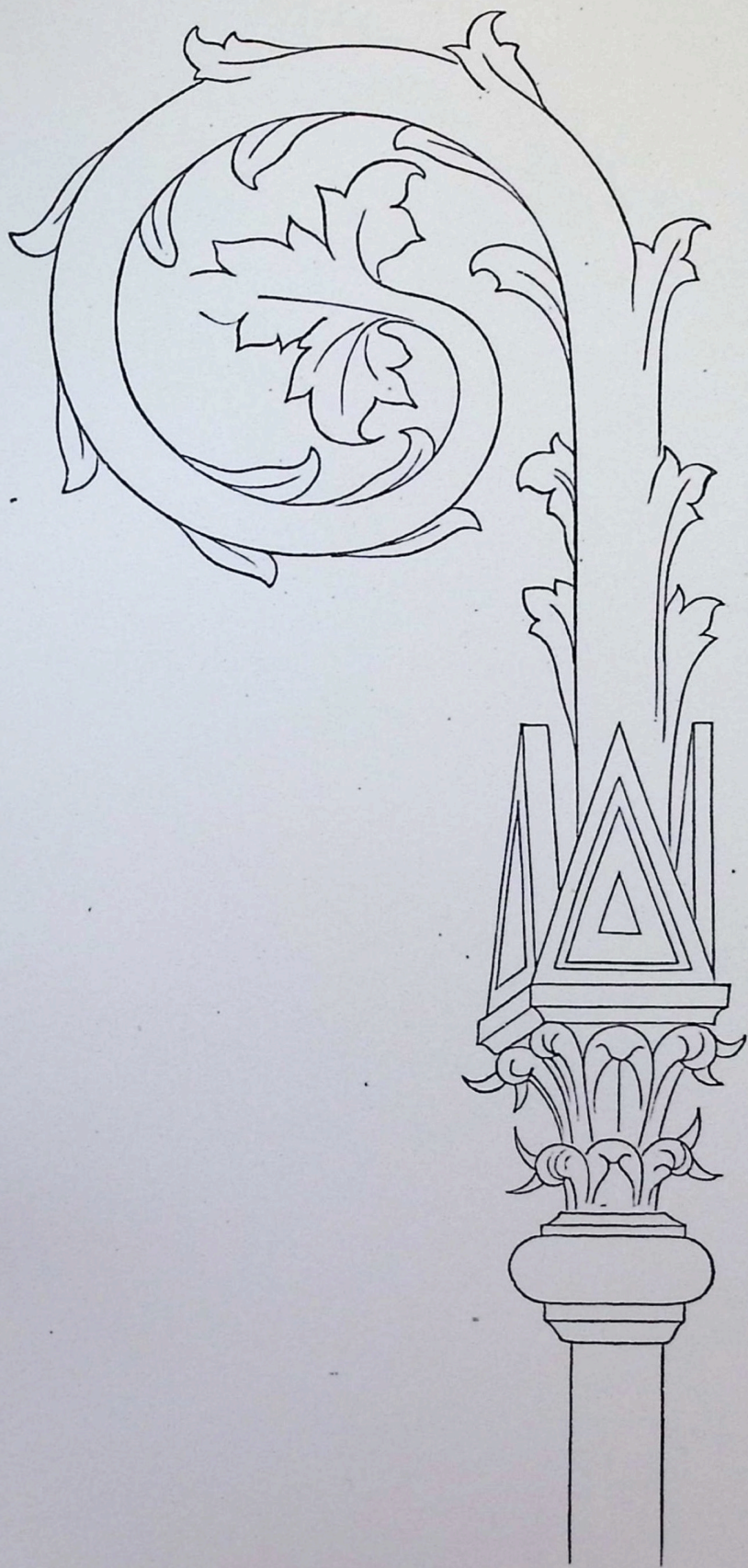


PLATE 18.

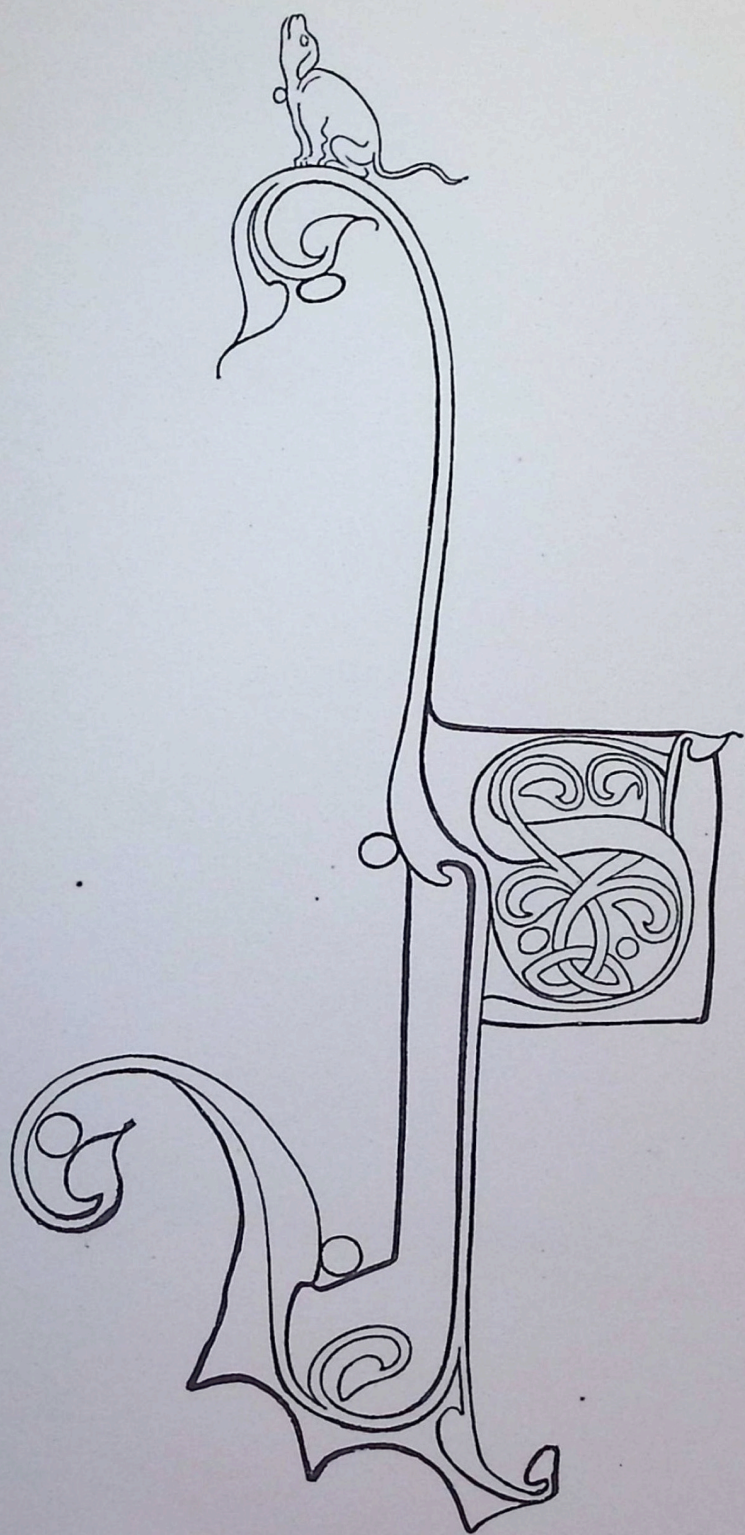


PLATE 19.

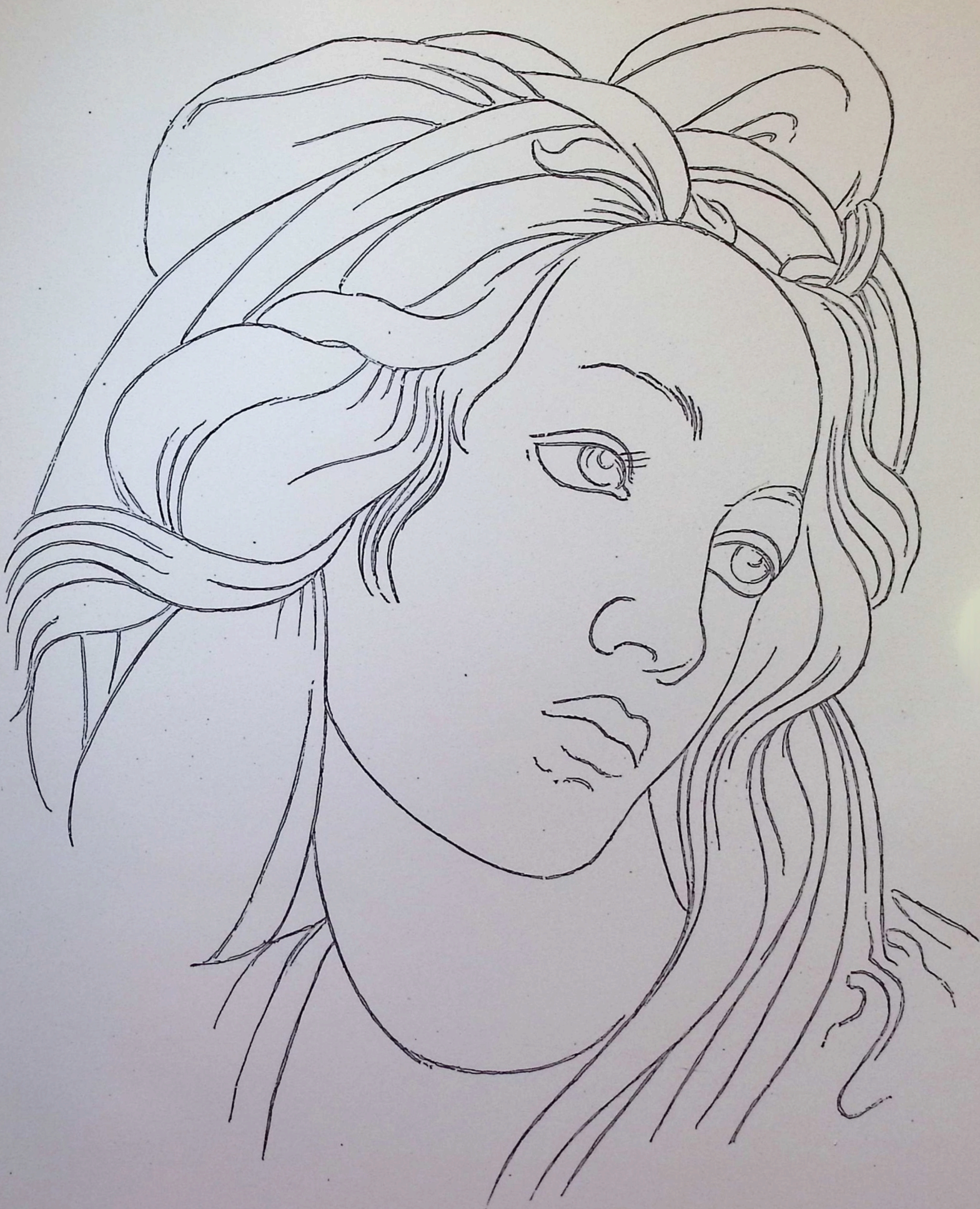


PLATE 20.

